Speech Act Analysis of Dialogues in "English for Iraq" at the Primary Stage

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Marwan N. Tawfiq
College of Arts, University of Mosul, Nineveh, Iraq.

Abstract:

Pragmatics is concerned with the study of language in context, which is central for actual communication. The pragmatic analysis involves verbal and nonverbal elements using different models. This study tries to analyze speech acts in dialogues of the sixth primary class, English for Iraq. The study collected the data from the EFL textbook at the 6th primary class. Consistent with the goal of the study, a methodological triangulation involving both qualitative and quantitative data is utilized. The first part includes describing and analyzing types of SAs adopting Searle 1969. Moreover, the second part presents speech acts' frequencies and percentages, as illustrated by graphs and tables. It attempts to give justifications why specific SAs are rarely utilized in this curriculum. The study found that directive speech act is the most frequent class in this book. The study will be beneficial for language learning and language teaching (for pedagogical purposes) as well as its useful role in translation.

Keywords: Speech Acts, English for Iraq, Pragmatics, Primary Stage, Dialogues.

1. Introduction

Yule (1996) presents pragmatics as the study of the hidden meaning, or how we understand written or spoken words even when they are implied. It is a scientific discipline that stands for the relationship between the sign and its gesturer. In general, pragmatics looks beyond an utterance's literal meaning to examine how meaning is used and concertantes on an inferred meaning.

Speech acts (henceforth: SAs) is one of the pragmatic theories, which is emerged as a response to logical positivism, a 1930s philosophical theory. Logical positivism holds that a phrase is "strictly speaking meaningless" unless it is true or false in relation to the reality it represents (Levinson, 1983, p. 227). According to SAs, people do actions, in addition to producing meaningful words and grammatical structures (Austin, 1962).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

To help individuals communicate and use language effectively, textbooks a variety of linguistic elements, including verbal and nonverbal cues. Researchers deal with the pragmatic competence of learners in different fields. SAs is tackled by many researchers in various situations in the literature. However, this study tackles analyzing the speech act in "English for Iraq" at the primary level, the material at the primary stage involves different SAs. Some of the utterances reveal many acts. Some of these performances are common, other are very rare. Revealing speech act in the sixth class at

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Corresponding author's e-mail: marwan.n.t@uomosul.edu.iq

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primary schools is very essential since it enables the learner to know which act is heavily utilized and which performance is infrequent.

In spite of the perceived importance of pragmatic capability in language acquisition, the use of SAs in English language education at the primary stage in Iraq stays restricted and underdeveloped. Iraqi primary English syllabi often highlight syntactic structure, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, while pragmatic items such as SAs (requests, apologies, compliments, promises, etc.) are either slightly addressed or totally absent. This absence of focus consequences in learners who may be syntactically competent but struggle with suitable language use in real-life communicative settings. Furthermore, Iraqi EFL teachers level frequently miss adequate exercise in teaching pragmatics at the primary level, and textbooks may not supply culturally relevant or contextually rich instances of SAs. Therefore, students lack critical chances to grow communicative ability and the socio-cultural consciousness essential for effective English use. This problem calls upon a closer inquiry into the mixing of SAs in early English order in Iraq and how pragmatic features of language can be more efficiently combined into the curriculum and methods of teaching.

1.3 Aims of the Study

The current study seeks to examine the following objective:

1) Supplying types and subtypes of SAs.
2) Discovering the most common speech act type in "English for Iraq" at the sixth primary class.
3) Discovering the least common speech act type.
4) Providing justifications why a certain speech act type is not adopted at the primary schools' syllabus.

1.4 Research Questions

The researcher tries to answers to the following research questions:

1) What are the types and subtypes of SAs involved in the Iraqi EFL textbook at the primary level 'English for Iraq'?
2) Which speech act is commonly used at the primary level?
3) Which speech act is rarely used at the primary level and why?

1.5 Research Hypotheses

Building on the questions raised above, the researcher hypothesizes the following:

1) There are specific types and subtypes of SAs that are mentioned in the English textbook.
2) The Representatives are heavily used at the primary school simply because this book enables pupils to be aware of stating facts and habits.
3) The commissive speech act is hardly utilized in this book.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is restricted to the analysis of written dialogues according to Searle's speech act in the EFL textbook at the 6th primary class.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Pragmatics

Linguists have been concentrating more on the formal aspects of language, which somewhat overlook the functional side that deals with the speaker's control of the linguistic forms of communication (Halliday and Webster, 2006).

Pragmatics is defined as the study of language use, which is strongly associated with context. Pragmatics is first presented by the American linguist Charles W. Morris, which was one of the three pillars of signs (Morris, 1938). According to Morris, pragmatics is one of the three main facets of semiotics, along with syntax and semantics, as syntax is connected to the formal relationships between signs, and pragmatics is concerned with relationships between the sign and the item it signifies (Levinson, 1983).

According to Yule (1996) pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by the speaker, which focuses on understanding people's intentions than the meanings of words they use. Mey (2001) describes pragmatics as the study of language use in human communication as determined by societal context. he claims that pragmatics meaning is explained according to how a user employs language to communicate.

In conclusion, early pragmatics, emerged in philosophers' writing. From a linguistic perspective, pragmatics is concerned

with meaning that shifts from one context to another, providing many purposes and interpretations where a variety of circumstances, including speakers, listeners and other contextual aspects, may affect the meaning.

2.2 Speech Act Theory

The German word "Sprechakt" from Buhler 1934 is where the term SAs originated. Austin used this term as a general title for his sessions which were published in his book titled "How to Do Things with Words" following his death in 1962. The restricted semantic implication predicted on the truth conditions and the limitation of semantic treatment to a particular category of sentences led to the discovery of speech act theory (Yule, 1996). According to Austin's (1962) speech act theory, humans do actions, in addition to producing many meaningful words and grammatical structures. Searle (1969, p.16) defines SAs as "the basic or minimum units of linguistic communication" To sum up, SAs is presented by the contribution of Austin and Searle who presented producing language as doing actions.

2.2.1 Searle's Theory

Austin's ideas were expanded up by American philosopher John, R. Searle. Austin's categorization of SAs is criticized by Searle in 1979. According to (Mey, 2001) Searle's study introduced an updated and reclassified taxonomy of SAs. Searle bases his categorization on a few general speech act theory tents.

Searle (1969) presented felicity conditions in his theory of SAs. According to Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007) Felicity conditions are the circumstances that must be met for an act to be considered correctly. Searle's (1969) conditions are presented below:

a) The Propositional Content Condition

This type of condition aims to limit language users' words in a statement (declaration, imperative and interrogative). For example, "I'll help you" is a promise in which, the propositional content requires a future action on addressee's behalf

b) Preparatory Conditions

This condition deals with the authority and the position of the speaker or the person who produces the language. For example, the speaker should have authority to prove that a crime was committed by the criminal (addressee).

c) Sincerity Conditions

It is related to the beliefs, intentions and desires of the speaker who produces the language. If the speaker does not possess the appropriate wish or doctrine, the condition will be unsuccessful. Misuse occurs when someone says they will do something, but they do not really intend to.

d) Essential Conditions

It has to do with the speaker's dedication to a certain belief or behavior. They examine constituent norms because they govern the development of a certain illocutionary act. They represent the semantic and syntactic requirements required to design an expression for a certain SA. Making a request requires the act to be completed.

2.2.2 Searle's Classification of SAs

Searle (1979) examines Austin's categorisation since it is based on interfering criteria. He notes that Austin does not clarify the distinction between SA verbs and SAs. He categorises SAs into five kinds (assertive, directives, commissures, expressive, and declarations), which will be thoroughly examined because they serve as the study's paradigm.

Searle is recognised as influential proponents of SA theory. He refines Austin's idea at the taxonomic level. It is important to note that Searle depends on 12 basic aspects of difference when comparing illocutionary behaviours, although he focusses on three principles that underpin most of his taxonomy (Searle,1979). The three principles include the following:

I. **Illocutionary Point**
   It conforms to the essential condition for distinguishing SAs, for example the goal or point of ordering speech act involves making or persuading the listener to do something, but the point of a promising speech involves the speaker's acceptance of duty to do something.

II. **Direction of Fit**
   It is related to the interaction between words and the world. Some illocution's illocutionary objective is to

make the words to correspond the world, while others want the worlds to match the words. This divergence represents a change in the direction of fit.

III. **Expressed Psychological State**

It is related to the sincerity condition. It encompasses emotions such as remorse, desire, intention, belief, or pleasure that a speaker conveys while executing a speech act. For example, a man communicates a conviction when he asserts, declares, explains something, but he shows an intention when he promises or pledges to do something etc.

Searle (1979) presented five taxonomies as follows:

1) **Representatives or Assertives**

The purpose of this taxonomy is to represent state of affairs. They are SAs through which speakers present information or belief as reflecting reality such as claiming, affirming, asserting etc.

2) **Directives**

The purpose of this taxonomy involves SAs through which speakers express an intention for the hearer to carry out a specific action such as asking, advising, suggesting, ordering etc.

3) **Commissives**

The purpose of this taxonomy involves SAs through which speakers bind themselves to carry out a future action such as promising, offering, threatening vowing, pledging etc.

4) **Expressives**

The purpose of this taxonomy involves SAs through which speakers express their psychological state toward a state of affairs such as thanking, apologizing, congratulating etc.

5) **Declarations**

The purpose of this taxonomy involves SAs through which speakers change a social or institutional status by having authority and power such as resigning, declaring war, naming a child, baptizing etc.

3. Methodology

The study collected data from the EFL textbook at the 6th primary class. Consistent with the goal of the study, a methodological triangulation involving both qualitative and quantitative data is utilized. The first part includes describing and analyzing types of SAs adopting Searle 1969. Moreover, the second part presents SAs' frequencies and percentages, as illustrated by graphs and tables.

4. Data Analysis and Discussions

This section presents the analysis and discussion of results.

4.1 Analyzing the Dialogues According to Searle's Taxonomy

Table 1. Analyzing the Dialogues According to Searle's Taxonomy.

No	The Sentences	Speech Act	Semantic Function
1	Our mum is a teacher.	Declaration	Declare
2	Our dad is an engineer	Declaration	Declare
3	How old is Basim's sister?	Directive	Ask
4	How many cousins does he have?	Directive	Ask
5	What's your dad job?	Directive	Ask
6	What's your mum job?	Directive	Ask
7	A farmer works on a farm.	Declaration	Declare
8	IT programmer works in an office.	Declaration	Declare
9	I want to be an IT programmer.	Declaration	Declare
10	I want to be an engineer.	Declaration	Declare
11	What's glass made of?	Directive	Ask

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12	What are the jeans made of?	Directive	Ask
13	What size are you?	Directive	Ask
14	Here you are	Declaration	Declare
15	Thank you	Expressive	Thank
16	You don't look well you should go home and tell you your mum	Directive	Advice
17	I am sorry	Expressive	Apology
18	What's the matter Basim?	Directive	Ask
19	You don't look well.	Assertive	State
20	I feel hot.	Declaration	Declare
21	Yes, my body is hot.	Assertive	Assert
22	Can I go to bed?	Directive	Request
23	You should go to bed.	Directive	Command
24	I am sure you will feel better.	Assertive	Assert
25	You need to go online to find a website you want.	Directive	Suggestion
26	How do I do that?	Directive	Ask
27	What do I write?	Directive	Ask
28	That's fantastic.	Declaration	Declare
29	I am keying in cough and cold.	Declaration	Declare
30	How are you now?	Directive	Ask
31	I don't feel well.	Assertive	State
32	Let's write some rules.	Directive	Suggestion
33	Keep knives away from children.	Directive	Advice
34	We made a poster about being safe at home.	Declaration	Declare
35	Can you help us write rules on the poster?	Directive	Request
36	It's two weeks before teacher's day.	Assertive	State
37	We are going to make special card for our teacher.	Declaration	Declare
38	Basim, read out of the rhyme.	Directive	Order
39	Mum, can we make a pizza?	Directive	Request
40	I am going to grate the cheese.	Declaration	Declare

Table 2. Analyzing the Dialogues According to Searle's Taxonomy.

Speech Acts	Frequency	Percentage
Directive	20	50
Declaration	13	32.5
Representative	5	12.5
Expressive	2	5
Commissive	0	0
Total Number of Acts	40	100

The table above presents the types of SAs in the sixth primary class. English for Iraq book involves many dialogues. These dialogues perform various SAs.

The dialogues are analyzed according Searle's taxonomy. According to the results, directives are the most frequent type, about (50%). This indicates that dialogues mostly contain

request, question, and order. Besides, stating, approval, and disapproval are included about (32.5%).

Affirming, believing and concluded are about (12.5). While the state of expressing welcoming and thanking represents (5%) of the total number of SAs. Additionally, a small percentage is presented in the performance of expressive SAs. Finally, the commissive represents (0%) in this, which means that this book involves no commissive acts.

Commissive acts, a type of speech act where the speaker commits to a certain course of action (such as promising, offering, or vowing), may not be commonly emphasized in English textbooks for sixth primary school students for certain reasons.

Firstly, English textbooks at the sixth-class primary school level, frequently concentrate on basic language concepts, such as "vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, and basic conversation". Notions like commissive acts may be regarded more complicated for pupils and could be presented later in a student's language education. Secondly, in primary school, the practical communication skills are often focused, such as "making requests, giving directions, or expressing opinions".

The abstract concepts related to SAs may not be as immediately appropriate or relevant at this stage. Thirdly, English books for younger learners commonly emphasis on the functional aspects of communication, like "asking for help or making simple offers".

As students promote to higher levels, more complicated speech act theory and formal classifications (like commissive acts) are often discovered. Fourthly, in many English books for young learners, the concentration is more on basic conversational pairs and not as much on the theoretical comprehension of how language operates. As children grow older, they are increasingly presented to more nuanced parts of language use, including SAs. Last but not least.

That being said, pupils may still face commissive performances in informal ways as they acquire through real-life situations, such as "making promises, offering help, or making invitations". These can be explored more fully in higher education or specialized language courses.

4.2 Findings

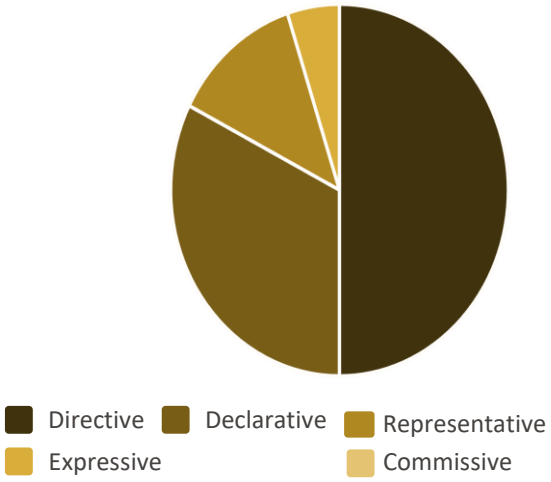


Figure 1. Distribution of Speech Act Types

Commissive SAs such as promising, offering, or guaranteeing are fundamental in pragmatics, stating the speaker's commitment to a future activity. Nevertheless, in English language learning contexts in Iraq, specifically at the primary school level, these SAs may not obviously feature since curriculum concentrate on basic communicative functions. Firstly, English curricula in Iraq mainly highlight basic skills at the primary level: vocabulary acquisition and basic sentence structures (e.g., greetings, self-introductions, naming objects).

Commissives require a higher level of linguistic and pragmatic alertness. Teachers may prefer more immediate, tangible language terms that correspond with younger learners' cognitive and linguistic development. Secondly, cultural and educational importance. In Iraqi educational culture: Teachers and syllabus designers may not highlight commissive SAs, observing them as less culturally appropriate or necessary for children. Thirdly, cognitive and developmental principles.

Commissives demand recognizing not only grammar but also intention, reference, and social requirement, which may surpass the developmental willingness of primary-level learners. Fourthly, linguistic simplification of teaching materials. English for Iraq textbooks and teaching materials utilized in Iraqi primary schools: generally, follow international simplified models concentrating on functions like requests, descriptions, and questions. Finally, sociolinguistic environment: English is mainly a foreign language in Iraq, not a second language used in daily interaction. English is learned

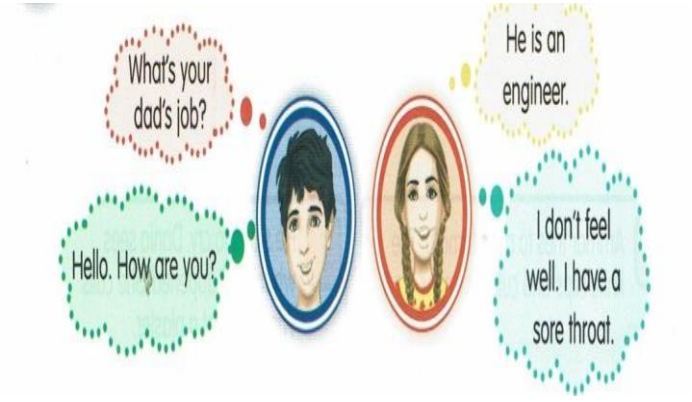
in a community that does not speak that language. The students at primary level, may have inadequate contact to real-life situations where commissives would naturally occur in English.

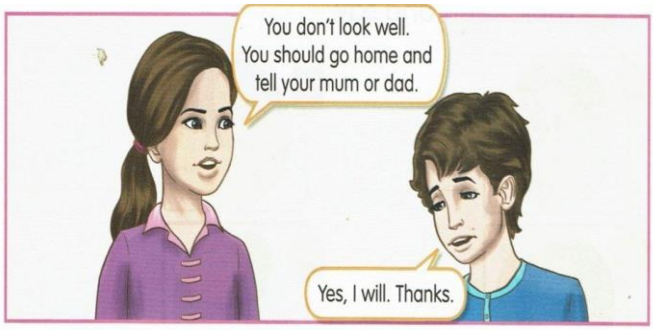
5. Discussion

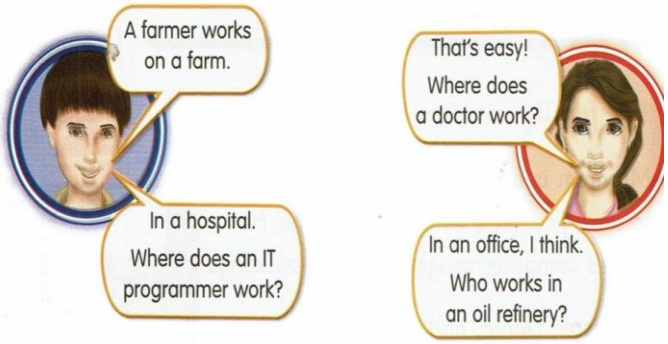
SAs are used in pedagogical contexts because they help facilitate effective communication, learning, and interaction between teachers and students. A speech act is an utterance that performs a function or action, such as making requests, offering explanations, giving instructions, or asking questions. In a pedagogical setting, SAs can support both the cognitive and social aspects of learning.

According to the results shown in the previous section, it is concluded that four types of Searle's classification of SAs appeared in this syllabus i.e., assertives, expressives, commissives and directives. Directive and declaration SAs come in the first rank and they are most frequently used in the sixth primary class. It also shows that directives are at the top of this book. Since it enables pupils to ask questions and building up the basic knowledge for them. While, there is no use of commissive acts. In short, the focus in sixth-grade English books is typically on foundational communication skills that children can immediately use, while more complex language concepts, like commissive acts, are often introduced in later stages of language education.

6. Samples of Analyzed Dialogues







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